

Section 2: Noah and Abraham's Mission

Surah Al-'Ankabut – Verses 14–15

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَلَبِثَ فِيهِمْ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ إِلَّا خَمْسِينَ عَامًا فَأَخَذَهُمُ
الطُّوفَانُ وَهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ

فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُ وَأَصْحَابَ السَّفِينَةِ وَجَعَلْنَاهَا آيَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ

14. “And certainly We sent Noah to his people, so he remained among them a thousand years save fifty years. And the deluge overtook them while they were unjust.”

15. “So we delivered him and the Companions of the Ark. And We made it a sign for all peoples.”

Propagation and training need patience and resistance. This holy verse shows the resistance of Noah (as) and obstinacy of people.

However, since the previous verses had some statements about the general trial of people, from here on the verses contain some discussions about the hard trials of the former divine prophets and their peoples that how they were under the pressure and hurt of their enemies, and how they applied considerable patience that finally they gained victory.

This was both consolation for the companions of the holy Prophet of Islam (S), who were under the harsh pressure of the powerful enemies of Islam in Mecca, and a threat for the enemies that they should be careful of the painful end of their lifetime.

At first, it begins from the first arch-prophet, i.e. Noah (as), and in some short sentences it explains that

part of his life that is more suitable with the condition of the Muslims of that day.

It says:

“And certainly We sent Noah to his people, so he remained among them a thousand years save fifty years...”

All days and nights Noah was busy teaching and inviting people to Monotheism. During this long time, that is 950 years, using the opportunity both in private and among public, Noah called them toward Allah and he did not become tired from this constant effort, and he did not let weakness and intermission come to him.

Yet, they did not believe save a small group (about eighty people as history narrates), that is, every twelve years one person.

Therefore, O Prophet! you should not get tired in the way of invitation toward the truth and struggle against deviations, because your program comparing that of Noah is very easy.

Now behold that how the end of this cruel and obstinate group of people was.

The verse continues saying:

“...And the deluge overtook them while they were unjust.”

And thus the length of their disgraceful life ended and their castles, palaces, and dead bodies were buried under the waves of flood.

The application of ‘a thousand years save fifty years’ in the verse, while it could say 950 years from the beginning, refers to the greatness and length of this time, because the figure ‘one thousand’ which is used in the form of ‘a thousand years’ for ‘the length of the time of propagation’ is counted a very enormous figure:

The apparent of the above verse shows that this amount was not the whole lifetime of Noah, though the present Torah has mentioned this figure for the entire lifetime of Noah¹, but he lived another length of time after Flood either, and according to some commentators this time was three hundred years.

Of course, this long lifetime comparing the usual life times of our age is very long and it does not seem natural. It is probable that the length of lifetime in those days was different from that of today.

Some documents indicate that, in principle, the people of Noah had a long lifetime and, in this course, Noah had also been extraordinary. However, this shows that the man’s structure lets him have a long lifetime.

The studies of the scientists show today that man’s lifetime has not a fix and determined restriction.

Some people consider it as limited to 120 years, or less and more than that which is completely baseless, and with the change of conditions it may vary.

Now, by some experiences, scientists could prolong the lifetime of some plants, or some other living creatures, to twelve times of their ordinary lifetime, and in some instances, if you do not wonder, to nine hundred times. If they succeed they can increase the man's lifetime with the same criterion, and man may live thousands of years.²

By the way, it must be noted that the Arabic word /tufan/ originally means any event that surrounds man. (It derives from Tawaf).

Then it has been used for abundant water, or a strong flood which covers a vast land and overtakes it, and also it has been used for any thing that is severe, much, and stretched, irrespective of wind, fire, and water. Sometimes it has also been used in the sense of severe darkness of the night.³

It is interesting that the holy verse says: /wa hum zalimun/ (while they were unjust) which means: at the time of the occurrence of the flood, they were going on their injustice. This indicates that if they had left this deed and became regretful with going to Allah, they would not have been involved in such an evil fate.

Then, in the next verse, it adds:

“So we delivered him and the Companions of the Ark. And We made it a sign for all peoples.”

It was made a sign for all peoples and it means that it is a gazing-stock for all people until the Hereafter Day, because the event of the Ark separated the line of the believers from disbelievers and distinguished the righteous ones from the guilty ones, in order to prove that Noah was truthful in his statement, and his people were infidels.

By the way, the pronoun in the Arabic phrase: /ja'alnaha/ refers to the Ark.

Surah Al-‘Ankabut – Verse 16

وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاتَّقُوهُ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

16. “And (recollect) Abraham when he said unto his people ‘Worship Allah and be in awe of Him; that will be best for you if you did but know’.”

Monotheism and piety are at the top of the programs of Divine prophets, and, therefore, worship without piety is not so effective.

Next to the concisely explained event of Noah (as) and his people, the Qur'an refers to the story of Abraham (as), the second great arch-prophet, and says:

“And (recollect) Abraham when he said unto his people ‘Worship Allah and be in owe of Him; that will be best for you if you did but know’.”

Here, the noble verse has stated two important creedal and practical programs of the prophets with together, which is invitation to ‘Monotheism’ and ‘piety’.

At the end of the verse it says if you contemplate correctly, following Monotheism and piety is the best for you, because they save you in this world from pollutions of polytheism and sin and affliction, and your next world will also be with perpetual felicity.

Surah Al-‘Ankabut – Verse 17

إِنَّمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْثَانًا وَتَخْلُقُونَ إِفْكًا إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ لَكُمْ رِزْقًا فَابْتَغُوا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الرِّزْقَ وَاعْبُدُوهُ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

17. “You worship idols besides Allah and you create a calumny, verily those whom you worship besides Allah do not own for you any sustenance, therefore seek the sustenance from Allah and worship (only) Him, and be grateful to Him, unto Him you shall be returned.”

Through the previous verse, Hadrat 'Ibrahim invited people to worship and obedience of Allah, and in this holy verse he (as) negates the worship of other than Allah and counts it useless while, at the end of the verse, he emphasizes again on the worship of Allah.

Then, Abraham points to the reasons of the nullification of idolatry and condemns their belief earnestly with different statements, each of which contains a separate reason.

At first, he says:

“You worship idols besides Allah...”

These idols are some statues with no soul. They have no will, no intellect, no sense, and no understanding, so that their appearance is a clear evidence for the falseness of the belief of idolatry.

You must be careful that the Arabic word /auan/ is the plural form of /waan/ in the sense of some pieces of stone which idolaters curve and worship.

After this, he goes further and he implicitly says that not only the circumstances of these idols show that

they cannot be worshipped, but you also know that you yourselves forge some falsehoods and put the name of the object of worship on them.

The verse continues as follows:

“...and you create a calumny...”

What kind of reason do they have for this great lie, except some fancies and superstitions?

Since the Arabic term /taxluqun/ is derived from /xalaqa/ which sometimes is used with the meaning of ‘to create and to make’ and sometimes with the sense of ‘to lie’, some commentators have mentioned another commentary upon this sentence which is different from what was said in the above.

They have said that the purpose is that you grate these idols (false idols) with your own hand and you create them. (Therefore, the word /’ifk/ means ‘false objects of worship’ and /xalq/ means ‘to grate and to create some stone and wooden idols’.

Then he refers to the third reason, saying that your worship due to these idols is either for material interests or your fate in the next world, and whichever of them it may be it is wrong, because:

“...verily those whom you worship besides Allah do not own for you any sustenance...”

You yourselves accept that idols are not creators, and the Creator is Allah, therefore the giver of sustenance is also Allah.

The verse says:

“...therefore seek the sustenance from Allah...”

And since He is the giver of sustenance, then worship and thank Him, too.

The verse continues saying:

“...and worship (only) Him, and be grateful to Him...”

In other words, one of the incentives of worship is usually thanksgiving unto the true benefactor. You know that the true Benefactor is Allah, then thanks and worship is also specific to His Pure Essence.

And if you seek the life of the next world, the return of all of you is unto Him, not unto idols.

The verse says:

“...unto Him you shall be returned.”

Idols are effective neither here nor there. Thus, Abraham (as) condemns their logic by means of a few

short and clear proofs in these verses.

Surah Al-‘Ankabut – Verse 18

وَإِنْ تُكَذِّبُوا فَقَدْ كَذَّبَ أُمَمٌ مِّن قَبْلِكُمْ وَمَا عَلَي الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ

18. “And if you reject (the Message), so did generations before you and nothing is incumbent on the messenger but a plain delivery (of the message).”

The rejection of the opponents should not hinder the act of propagation.

In this verse, as a threat and also as heedlessness to them, Abraham (as) says:

“And if you reject (the Message), so did generations before you...”

And, of course, they were punished severely with a painful chastisement.

The verse continues saying:

“...and nothing is incumbent on the messenger but a plain delivery (of the message).”

The objective of “**generations before you**” is the people of Noah and the nations who came to live after them.

Surah Al-‘Ankabut – Verse 19

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَيْفَ يُبْدِئُ اللَّهُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ

19. “Have they not seen how Allah originates creation, then brings it back again? Verily that is easy for Allah.”

Creation, causing to die, and to raise from the dead are the permanent work of Allah; and the world of creation is the manifestation of providence in creating the life and death of phenomenon.

In this point, the Qur’an temporarily leaves out the story of Abraham, and completes the discussion that Abraham had in the field of Monotheism and expressing his own prophethood by mentioning reason upon Resurrection, and concerning the rejecters of Resurrection it says:

“Have they not seen how Allah originates creation, then brings it back again?...”

The purpose of the act of ‘see’ is the observation by heart and having knowledge about it. It means: do they not know the quality of the creation of Allah? The same One Who had the power of ‘the first creation’ is also able to return it, because having power on one thing is the power on its similar ones, too.

This is also probable that the word ‘see’ here is used in the sense of observation by the eye, because everybody observes by his eye that dead lands are quickened, plants grow, babies are born from sperm drop, and chickens are produced from eggs. The One Who is able to do such things, is also able to bring the dead to life again.

Then, at the end, as an emphasis, it says:

“... Verily that is easy for Allah.”

It is so because comparing the creation on the first day, revival is counted an easier work.

This meaning, of course, is due to the conception and logic of individuals, else being easy or difficult has no meaning for the One Whose Power is unlimited. It is our limit power that creates these concepts and regarding its application, some things are difficult and some others are easy.

Surah Al-‘Ankabut – Verse 20

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ بَدَأَ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُنْشِئُ النَّشْأَةَ الْآخِرَةَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

20. “Say: ‘Travel in the earth and see how He has originated the creation, then Allah brings forth the later creation; verily Allah is powerful over everything’.”

By exact study in creation, we can remove our doubt and know Allah better than before.

Peregrination, traveling, studying the nature, and purposeful excursion is a duty and value.

This holy verse continues the subject of Resurrection. This meaning has been expressed in the form of parenthetical clauses in the middle of the story of Abraham (as).

This is not the first time that we encounter such a method of explanation. This is the style of the Qur’an that when the statement of a story reaches a sensitive stage, it temporarily leaves the rest of it and pays to the necessary conclusion emerged from that story.

However, this verse invites people to extroversive traveling upon the subject of Resurrection, while the

previous verse had mostly the side of introversive traveling. The verse implicitly says that you should travel on the earth in order to see kinds of living creatures, and different nations with their specialties and observe how Allah (s.w.t.) has originated the creation.

The verse announces:

“Say: ‘Travel in the earth and see how He has originated the creation...”

Then, the same Lord, Who has the power to create these plenty creatures with various colours and different nations, is able to bring forth the next creation, because by the first creation He has proved His Power to all and, truly, He is powerful over everything.

The verse says:

“...then Allah brings forth the later creation; verily Allah is powerful over everything’.”

Both this verse and the verse before it prove the possibility of Resurrection through the way of the vastness of Providence, with this difference that the first verse talks about the first creation of man himself and whatever is around him while the second verse commands to study the different states of other nations and creatures so that they see the first life in different features and in various conditions, and be acquainted with the generality of the Power of Allah and understand His ability to the return of this life.

In fact, in the same way that proving Monotheism is sometimes possible by observing the ‘introversive signs’ and sometimes by ‘extroversive signs’, proving resurrection can be done through both of them, too.

Today, this verse can give scientists some deeper and more exact meaning in this manner that they go and see the effects of the first living creatures in the depth of the seas, inside mountains, and between the levels of the earth.

In this way, they can understand a part of the secrets of the beginning of life in the earth as well as the greatness and power of Allah, and do know that He is able to bring back the life.

By the way, the Arabic word /naš’at/ originally means ‘to create and train something’ and sometimes the term: /naš’at-il-’ula/ is used for ‘this world’ and /naš’at al-’axirah/ is used in the sense of ‘the next world’.

This point is also notable that at the end of the previous verse the sentence:

“Verily that is easy for Allah”

and at the end of this verse the sentence:

“Verily Allah is powerful over everything”

are mentioned. This difference may be for the sake that the first verse states a limit study and the second one indicates to a vast study.

Surah Al-‘Ankabut – Verses 21-22

يُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَرْحَمُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُقْلَبُونَ

وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا
نَصِيرٍ

21. “He punishes whom He pleases and has mercy on whom He pleases, and unto Him you will be turned back.”

22. “You are not able to frustrate Him either in the earth or in heavens; and you have not, apart from Allah, either protector or helper.”

The training style of the Qur’an is in a manner that when it states the love and wrath of Allah it often begins with love and mercy and then refers to wrath and chastisement, but since this verse is the continuation of the rejection of disbelievers it has begun the words about punishment, and next to it, it has spoken about the Divine mercy.

Then, this holy verse refers to the completion of one of the issues concerning the Resurrection, i.e. the issue of mercy and punishment.

It says:

“He punishes whom He pleases and has mercy on whom He pleases, and unto Him you will be turned back.”

In other words, though His mercy precedes His punishment, here punishment has been mentioned before mercy, because the verse intends to threat and the word suitable for threat is said in this manner.

By the way, this point is also clear that the purpose of the Qur’anic phrase: *Iman yaša’* (**whom He pleases**) is the Divine Will accompanied with wisdom. That is, whom He knows deserving and eligible for it, because the Divine Will is not undue and it is consistent with eligibilities and merits.

The Arabic phrase /taqlibun/ is derived from /qalb/ which originally means: ‘To change a thing from one form into another form’, and since on the Hereafter Day man changes from soil into a complete living

being, this meaning has been used for his second creation.

This meaning may also refer to this point that in Hereafter man will be changed in a way that his inward aspect will appear and his interior secrets will be made manifest and, thus, it reminds the meaning of verse 9 from Surah At-Tariq, No. 86, which says:

“On the Day when hidden things shall be made manifest.”

Then, in the next verse, on the completion of this discussion which is about the punishment and mercy of Allah, and that the return of all is unto Him, it adds implicitly that if you think that you can exit from the domain of Allah, the Almighty, and that the grips of punishment may not seize you, you are in a great err, because:

“You are not able to frustrate Him either in the earth or in heavens...”

And if you think that a guardian or helper will defend you, you are wrong, too, because:

“...and you have not, apart from Allah, either protector or helper.”

In fact, deliverance from the Divine punishment is either in the case that you go out of the realm of the government of Allah, or that you remain and, relying on the power of others, defend yourself; while neither going out of it is possible when everywhere is His realm, and all the world of existence belongs to Him, nor does anyone exist who can stand before His Power and defend you.

The Late Tabarsy in Majma‘-ul-Bayan says:

“A guard in /waliyy/ is he who helps without asking”.

Regarding those two words, it can be said that /waliyy/ refers to the guardian who helps without asking him to help, and /nasir/ is the helper who comes to help after asking him to help.

Thus, the Qur’an shuts all the doors of escaping from the grips of Divine punishment to the wrong-doers.

1. Torah, Genesis, chapter 9

2. You may refer to the book: “Mahdi ‘Inqlabi-yi- Buzurg”

3. Mufradat by Raqib and ‘Amid Dictionary

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/enlightening-commentary-light-holy-quran-vol-13/section-2-noah-and-abrah>

ams-mission